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PUBLIC INPUT SOUGHT ON STATE FORESTS AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS IN CENTRAL BERKSHIRES

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) will conduct a public meeting on Thursday, February 24, 2005 to begin the development of State Forest and Wildlife Management Area Resource Management Plans in the central Berkshire area.

According to Steve Pritchard, Acting Commissioner of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, "This public meeting initiates our efforts to complete important Resource Management Plans for DCR lands and facilities in the central Berkshire area. These plans will set management direction for our state forests for the next 15 years and meet the conditions of green certification."

The development of a management plan is mandated by statute for all state-owned forests, parks and reservations as a condition of green certification. The goal of green-certified forests is to manage ecological, recreational, social, and economic issues in a sustainable manner over long periods of time. Additionally, the state's goal is to produce the kind of long-term plans that emphasize diverse native plant communities and wildlife values, overall forest health, and environmentally responsible outdoor recreational opportunities.

The public is invited to attend the meeting, which will begin at 6:30 pm at the DCR Regional Headquarters, 740 South St. (off Route 7) in Pittsfield, MA. The agenda includes an explanation of the need for resource management plans, information on how the public may participate in the planning process, and solicitation of initial public suggestions on how state lands should be managed and used.

DCR and DFG facilities in the central Berkshire area include Bryant Mountain State Forest, Gilbert A. Bliss State Forest, Chesterfield State Forest, Dead Branch State Forest, Becket State Forest, Chester-Blanford State Forest, C.M. Gardner State Park, Peru State Forest, Middlefield State Forest, Ashmere Lake State Park, Worthington State Forest, October Mountain State Forest, Pittsfield State Forest, Laurel Lake Boat Ramp, the Appalachian Trail Corridor, Wahconah Falls State Park and Wildlife Management Areas.

Acting Commissioner Pritchard said, “Our goal is to involve citizens in the planning process as a means of understanding their needs and to reach consensus on how the Commonwealth’s public lands should be managed. The planning process will include discussion and decisions on all natural resources, activities, and uses.”

For additional information on the central Berkshire area Resource Management Plan process or the public meeting, please contact Kris Massini, DCR Management Forester, at P.O. Box 1433, Pittsfield, MA 01202, (413) 442-8928 ext 33.

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